

26th August 1999

28 Quarry Lane
Bromsgrove
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CWS/AND

Dear Mr. Jaffe

2272 '99 SEP 13 AS 50

I am writing to draw your attention to the forced molting of battery hens in the USA.

The lives of battery hens are miserable enough- they are squeezed into small wire cages in which they cannot move properly and have their feet damaged by standing on the wire. They have their beaks cut off with a red-hot blade.

But when egg production drops, at least 75% of the 260 million laying hens in North America endure another bizarre torment- producers attempt to force one last laying cycle out of the exhausted spent hens before sending them to slaughter. They do this by cruelly and unnaturally forcing the hens to "molt". In nature, hens replace old feathers with new ones every single year and spend about four months dropping old feathers and growing new ones. During molting season, hens don't produce eggs. Forced molting throws hens' systems into collapse, stressing and shocking them into losing their feathers quickly and forcing their worn-out bodies into another laying cycle.

To trick the hens into laying more eggs, they are deprived of food and water for 2 weeks or more. Many hens starve to death as a result of this trauma. Typically, birds who survive grow weak, shed all their feathers and lose up to 35% of their body weight. To shock the birds even more, they are kept in total darkness for weeks on end. The starving birds even resort to eating feathers. Forced molting also weakens hens' bones resulting in fragile and broken limbs. When egg production finally becomes too low to be profitable, the hens are sent for slaughter.

Not only is this extremely cruel to the hens but it also poses a risk to humans. Research has shown that forced molting is a major cause of salmonella poisoning in eggs. The stressful conditions weaken the birds' immune systems so badly that they become prone to disease. The result is sick birds and contaminated eggs which humans then eat.

Forced molting is so cruel that it was banned in Great Britain in 1987 and most European countries do not allow food deprivation for more than 24 hours. Yet in North America, no laws protect these birds from the cruelty.

Due to the cruelty involved and the risk to human health, I urge you to ban forced molting immediately

Yours sincerely


Miss N.J. Nokes

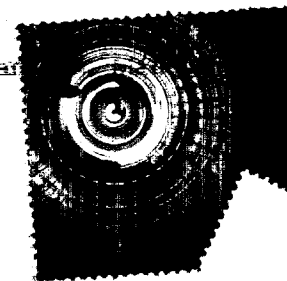
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